

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A computer-implemented and Internet-based method of managing Accounts Receivable (AR) information, comprising the steps of:

receiving a customer request for remote Internet access to AR information that is owned  
5 by a deploying company;

retrieving the customer's AR information from a database and enabling the retrieved AR information to be remotely displayed for the customer;

enabling personnel at the deploying company to retrieve and display the customer's AR information at any time, even simultaneously as the AR information is displayed for the  
10 customer.

2. The method of Claim 1, wherein the AR information is displayed on a World Wide Web (Web) browser.

3. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of enabling keyword searching of the AR information stored in the database through a Web browser to retrieve any  
15 information stored in the database that matches an entered search criteria, irrespective of a category in which the information is stored in the database.

4. The method of Claim 3, wherein the keyword searching allows restricted searching based on at least one of amount range, date range, due date range, category, customer, customer location, applied payments, open items, closed items, pending items, Credit Memo  
20 Requests, Credit Memos, a document number and any data categorization the database.

5. The method of Claim 3, wherein the keyword searching across all customer AR information is restricted to personnel of the deploying company.

6. The method of Claim 1, wherein the retrieved AR information includes invoice information that is optimized for printing in a format that matches a format of a corresponding  
5 paper invoice.

7. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of restricting access to the AR information by the personnel of the deploying company to selected personnel.

8. The method of Claim 7, wherein the selected personnel includes collectors, accountants, AR personnel of the deploying company and sales personnel.

9. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of enabling customers to dispute one of all and a portion of an invoice and to create and submit a Credit Memo Request.

10. The method of Claim 9, further comprising the step of providing a plurality of reason codes for disputing the invoice, each of the reason codes being mapped to a corresponding user interface, the user interface displaying only information specific to its corresponding reason  
15 code.

11. The method of Claim 10, wherein each of the reason codes includes a flag that determines whether the reason code is visible only to personnel of the deploying company.

12. The method of Claim 11, wherein the reason codes visible only to the personnel of the deploying company include bankruptcy and goodwill.

13. The method of Claim 10, wherein the reason codes visible to the customers include freight, tax, shipping, duplicate invoice and specific invoice line.

14. The method of Claim 9, wherein the method implements a workflow engine, the workflow engine defining and enforcing a hierarchical routing of the Credit Memo Request as the Credit Memo Request is processed by the deploying company.

15. The method of Claim 9, further comprising the step of automatically generating a Credit Memo Request and updating the customer's AR information in real time when the Credit Memo Request is approved.

16. The method of Claim 14, wherein the workflow engine carries out a step of notifying at least one of the customer and selected personnel of the deploying company when the Credit Memo Request is approved and a corresponding Credit Memo is generated.

17. The method of Claim 16, wherein the notifying step is carried out by at least one of email and by updating a Web site.

18. The method of Claim 9, further comprising the step of marking an invoice against which a Credit Memo Request has been submitted.

19. The method of Claim 1, wherein the customer request for remote access includes customer authentication data.

20. The method of Claim 1, wherein the retrieved and displayed customer AR information includes a summary screen summarizing the customer's AR information.

21. The method of Claim 20, further comprising the step of hyperlinking at least some of the summarized AR information on the summary screen to enable the customer to view detailed AR information corresponding the hyperlinked summarized AR information.

22. The method of Claim 1, wherein the retrieved and displayed AR information includes information related to at least one of invoices, payments, Credit Memos applied to a particular invoice, Credit Memos applied to an entire customer account and Credit Memo Requests.

5 23. The method of Claim 1, wherein the displayed AR information is dynamically sortable and wherein the method further comprises the step of sorting and re-displaying the displayed AR information.

24. The method of Claim 1, wherein an appearance of the displayed AR information is customizable to match a corporate identity of the deploying company.

10 25. The method of Claim 1, wherein the displayed AR information includes a first portion and a second portion, the first portion displaying static AR information including customer name, customer number and the second portion displaying dynamic AR information that changes depending upon an action by the customer.

15 26. The method of Claim 25, wherein the second portion is adapted to include invoice information and configurable messages from the deploying company.

27. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of displaying a button along with the displayed AR information, wherein clicking on the button causes all activities associated with a currently displayed item to be displayed.

20 28. Computer-implemented and Internet-based method of disputing an invoice from a vendor to a customer, comprising the steps of:

accessing a database record corresponding to the invoice to be disputed over a Web site of the vendor;

selecting a reason code for the dispute along with an identification of a disputed amount;

validating a Credit Memo Request incorporating the selected reason code and the  
5 disputed amount to create a pending Credit Memo Request;

causing the Credit Memo Request to be sent to and routed through at least one of a selected process for the selected reason code, a selected hierarchy of persons empowered to approve Credit Memo Request incorporating the selected reason code and a primary approver for the selected reason code;

10 receiving a notification upon approval or rejection of the pending Credit Memo Request, the disputed amount being automatically credited to the disputed invoice when the pending Credit Memo Request is approved.

29. The method of Claim 28, wherein the selecting step selects a reason code from among a group of reason codes including freight charges, taxes, shipping charges, duplicate  
15 invoice, specific invoice line and at least one vendor-defined reason code.

30. The method of Claim 28, wherein when the selected reason code does not fit a reason for requesting the Credit Memo, the selecting step further includes a step of adding explanatory comments to a blank field, thereby enabling the established hierarchy of persons empowered to approve the validated Credit Memo Request and the primary approver for the  
20 selected reason code to process the Credit Memo Request.

31. The method of Claim 28, wherein the validating step includes a step of submitting the Credit Memo Request if the Credit Memo Request is correct and includes the step of correcting the Credit Memo Request if any information appearing thereon is incorrect.

32. The method of Claim 28, wherein the validating step includes a step of displaying the Credit Memo Request for the customer and giving the customer a first option to submit the Credit Memo Request to execute the causing step and a second option to return to an earlier screen to correct any incorrect information on the Credit Memo Request.

33. The method of Claim 28, wherein the reason codes, process, hierarchy and primary approver are defined by the vendor upon enabling the computer-implemented method.

34. The method of Claim 28, further comprising a step of authenticating a customer before allowing the customer to carry out the accessing step.

35. The method of Claim 28, further including a step of accessing a current status of the pending Credit Memo request in real time.

36. The method of Claim 28, further including a step of marking the disputed invoice with a legend or indicia indicating that a Credit Memo Request is pending there against.

37. An Internet-based electronic system for enabling remote access and management of Accounts Receivable (AR) information of a deploying company, the system comprising:

a database that configured to store the AR information;

a first computer arranged to receive a customer request for remote Internet access to the AR information, to retrieve the AR information from the database upon receiving the customer

request and to enable the retrieved AR information to be remotely displayed for the requesting customer;

a second computer arranged to enable personnel at the deploying company to retrieve and display the customer's AR information simultaneously as the AR information is displayed for the customer.

38. The system of Claim 37, wherein the AR information is displayed on each of the first and second computers using a World Wide Web (Web) browser.

39. The system of Claim 37, wherein each of the first and second computers are further arranged to carry out keyword searching of the database through a Web browser to retrieve any information stored in the database that matches an entered search criteria, irrespective of a category in which the information is stored in the database.

40. An Internet-based electronic system for disputing an invoice from a vendor to a customer, the system comprising:

a database configured to store the invoice;

a computer adapted to connect to the Internet;

a Web site, the Web site being controlled by the vendor and accessible by the computer, the Web site being configured to allow a customer using the computer to remotely access the invoice and to dispute the invoice by:

selecting a reason code for the dispute and at least a disputed amount;

validating a Credit Memo Request incorporating the selected reason code and the disputed amount to create a pending Credit Memo Request, and

causing the Credit Memo Request to be sent to be processed through a workflow engine to send and route the Credit Memo Request through at least one of a selected process for the selected reason code, a selected hierarchy of persons empowered to approve Credit Memo Request incorporating the selected reason code and a primary approver for the selected reason  
5 code.

41. The system of Claim 40, wherein the workflow engine is further configured to send a notification upon approval or rejection of the pending Credit Memo Request, the disputed amount being automatically credited to the disputed invoice when the pending Credit Memo Request is approved.

10 42. The system of Claim 40, wherein the Web site is further configured to allow the customer to add explanatory comments to a blank field, to enable the selected hierarchy of persons empowered to approve the validated Credit Memo Request and the primary approver for the selected reason code to process the Credit Memo Request when the selected reason code does not fit a reason for requesting the Credit Memo Request.

15 43. The system of Claim 40, wherein the Web site is further configured to allow a submission of the Credit Memo Request if the Credit Memo Request is correct and the correction of the Credit Memo Request if any information therein is incorrect.

44. The system of Claim 40, wherein the reason codes, process, hierarchy and primary approver are adapted to be predefined by the vendor.

20 45. The system of Claim 40, wherein the Web site is further configured to authenticate a customer before allowing the customer to access the invoice.



46. The system of Claim 40, wherein the Web site is further configured to enable real time access to a status of the pending Credit Memo request.

47. The system of Claim 40, wherein the Web site is further configured to mark the disputed invoice with a legend or indicia indicating that a Credit Memo Request is pending there  
5 against.